DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 224 066 CS 504 046

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TITLE Communication of Love and Decision-Making Power in Dating Relationships.
PUB DATE Oct 82
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Communication, Language, and Gender Conference (5th, Athens, OH, October 15-16, 1982).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Behavior Patterns; *Communication Research; *Dating (Social); *Decision Making; Females; Higher Education; *Individual Power; Interpersonal Communication; Males; *Role Perception; Self Concept; *Sex Differences; Sex Role
IDENTIFIERS Love

ABSTRACT

A study explored the relationship between romantic love and decision making power in college students' dating relationships. W. Waller's theory that the person who is "least in love" gains power over the person who is relatively "more in love" was tested in terms of C. Safilios-Rothchild's typology of "Orchestration Power" (infrequent but important decisions) and "Implementation Power" (frequent but unimportant decisions). Hypotheses related types of power to the way subjects expressed their romantic involvement. A 12-page questionnaire containing two sets of questions, one on the love expression variable, and the other on the decision making variable, was completed by 127 subjects. The results did not support the Safilios-Rothchild typology. The three major results were that (1) an overwhelming majority perceived dating decision making patterns as an equally shared activity or a give-and-take parallel activity; (2) male respondents perceived making important dating decisions as a self-oriented masculine activity, while female respondents perceived making important decisions as primarily a parallel give-and-take process; and (3) both males and females perceived making unimportant decisions as a mutual, equally shared process. These results suggest that future studies address differences in decision making patterns and the strong distinctions in male/female perceptions. (JL)

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COMMUNICATION OF LOVE AND DECISION-MAKING POWER IN DATING RELATIONSHIPS

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CS504066

Paper presented at the Fifth Annual Communication, Language, and Gender Conference
Ohio University. Athens, OHIO.

October 15 - 16, 1982

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The objective of this study is concerned with exploring the relationship between romantic love and decision-making power in college students' dating relationships. Love, the word familiar to all, has been a neglected variable in social science research. It seems that many researchers believe that love cannot be conceptualized as a social science construct because: First, love is a subjective elusive feeling residing within an individual that defies both operationalization and measurement; and secondly, it is a romantic myth between two attracted individuals, hence,studying love as a variable somehow "devalues" the sacred concept (Knapp, 1978).

However, there are other researchers in the field of social science that take on a serious interest in love. Walster and Walster (1978) conceptualize love as a label for physiological arousal. Schwartz and Merten (1980) discuss the nature of love as a cultural process. Rubin (1973, 1974) defines romantic love as an intimate bond between two committed individuals that manifests itself through close and confidential communication. It is the latter perspective, that is, the explicit expression of love, that will be the focus of this investigation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The verbal and/or nonverbal expression of love in a courtship relationship is a high-risk activity. It connotes certain levels of commitment and involvement in the dating relationships. For this particular study, love is conceptualized as a valued resource between dating partners in the intimate relationships. Love is something sought by both involved parties and it fulfills certain

basic needs in the dating dyads.

According to Waller's (1951) "Principle of Least Interest," the person who is "least in love" gains power as a result of being in control of a valued resource; the person who is relatively "more in love" becomes more vulnerable as he/she is more committed and involved in the romantic relationship. As love is not something that can be felt or expressed equally at all times by both involved parties, the cost for the one who is "more in love" would be relatively higher than for the one who is "least in love" (Waller, 1951; Scanzoni, 1972; Safilios-Rothschild, 1976). The "more in love" individual becomes dependent on the "least in love" partner for the scarce resource of love (Blau, 1964). Therefore the relative degree to which an individual expresses love for the other partner is a crucial variable underlying the power dynamics in intimate relationships.

The study on power in intimate relationships has also been problematic (Safilios-Rothschild, 1970; Berger, 1980). Most researchers in family research choose to identify power in terms of decision-making process (Heer, 1962; Hill, 1965; Michel, 1967; Olsen, 1969; Lamouse, 1969; Lupri, 1969). Power is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that is measured indirectly through the self-report acts of decision-making patterns (Safilios-Rothschild, 1970). Decision-making itself is not a simple process. It has multiple phases at multiple levels of abstraction. For example, in some studies, decisions such as family size, childrearing, in-law relationships, friendship choices,and use of leisure time are omitted (Blood and Wolfe, 1960); whereas in other studies (Burchinal and Bauder, 1965; Wilkening and Bharadwaj, 1967),decisions such as childrearing practices, friendship choices,and household purchases have been included as important decision-making questions in marital relationships, but family size,in-law relationships were not included. Thus, the degree of

specificity of decisions asked varies from one study to another.

Considerable discrepancies have also been reported between husbands' and wives' responses about the prevailing decision-making patterns in the family. Heer (1962) used only the husbands' responses because the males were considered as the major decision-makers, the "bread-earners" in the family in the '60s. However, De Lenero (1969) found that with regard to many household decisions, wives tended to attribute more decision-making power to themselves than husbands do; while husbands tended to perceive decision-making as more equalitarian than the wives. It is possible that while one spouse makes a decision at one level, the other may decide on the same issue at a higher level. As Ryder (1970) points out, knowing who makes a decision may be very different than knowing who decides who makes that decision.

The simple number of decisions made by an individual is a relatively poor measure of decision-making since one party may relegate decisions which are perceived to be unimportant and tedious to another party (Komarovsky, 1967; Safilios-Rothschild, 1969, 1970). As a result, it is important to examine the dimensions of frequency and importance of the decisions being made in intimate dyads. Safilios-Rothschild (1976) studied the relationship between power and love from the perspective of an exchange model. She interviewed 100 Athenian couples and divided the subjects into four groups: (1) couples in which both spouses are not in love with each other; (2) couples in which the husband is more in love with the wife than she is with him; (3) couples in which the wife is more in love; and (4) couples in which both spouses are equally in love with each other. Based on self-report data, she developed a typology of intimate decision-making patterns grounded on the distinctions between spouses who have "Orchestration Power" and those who only have

"Implementation Power."

Persons who have Orchestration Power in the relationship tend to make the infrequent but important decisions. In contrast, persons with Implementation Power in the relationship tend to make the frequent but unimportant decisions. Results of her data supported the following four hypotheses: (1) When women perceive their husband as "more in love" they perceive themselves as making the more infrequent but important decisions in the family; (2) when both spouses are perceived as equally in love, power seems to be equally held by both husbands and wives; (3) when both spouses are perceived by the wife as "not in love," the trends show husband-dominance because of traditional male-dominance role; and (4) decision-making data only reflect the overall Orchestration Power, as Greek husbands who are perceived as "less in love" can always resort to socioeconomic resources as a form of control than trading love for decision-making power. Thus, the resource of love takes on a greater degree of significance for women who do not have access to other resources which can bargain love with power.

PRESENT INVESTIGATION

In this particular study, the investigator is interested in testing the relationship between Waller's "Principle of Least Interest" and Safilios-Rothschild's typology of Orchestration and Implementation Power in the context of college students' dating relationships. Specifically, two research questions guided this study: First, what is the relationship between the expression of love and decision-making patterns in college students' dating relationships? Second, can we delineate sex differences in the communication of love and power in these intimate relationships?

Altogether five groups of subjects are classified based on their five levels of romantic involvement. These five groups of subjects are:

(1) subjects who have not openly expressed love for their partners; nor their partners to them; (2) subjects who first and also most often communicate love to their partners; (3) subjects in which their romantic partners first and most often communicate love to them; (4) subjects who see themselves and their partners equally expressing love for each other through verbal and nonverbal cues; and (5) subjects who have no clear love expression patterns: the involved individuals take turns in expressing love through verbal and/or nonverbal levels.

In terms of power in dating relationships, there are also a number of possibilities regardless of who possesses Orchestration Power and Implementation Power. Obviously, decisions can be made by one party or the other party. However, there are at least two other possibilities in which decision-making is more equally allocated. One of these is the Mutual Condition--decisions are being mutually made by both romantic parties. The other is the Parallel Condition--in which one party makes some decisions and the other party makes other decisions. In brief, there are four conditions of decision-making in this study: (1) Self makes decisions greater than 50% of the time in the relationship; (2) Other (the romantic partner) makes decisions greater than 50% of the time; (3) Both parties mutually make decisions greater than 50% of the time; and (4) Parallel decision-making patterns between participant and his/her romantic partner.

In exploring the general relationship between the communication of love and decision-making power in college students'dating relationships, the following hypotheses will be tested:

H1: Subjects who express love less frequently are more likely to possess Orchestration Power (infrequent but important decisions) in the relationship;

H2: Subjects who express love more frequently are more likely to possess Implementation Power (frequent but unimportant decisions) in the relationship;

H3: Orchestration Power is more likely to be evenly shared (in either a mutual or parallel condition) when both parties communicate love equally; and

H4: Implementation Power is more likely to be equally shared (in either a mutual or parallel condition) when both parties communicate love equally to one another.

Based on past literature review on romantic love and decision-making patterns (Safilios-Rothschild, 1970, 1976), it is also expected that there will be sex differences in the expression of love and decision-making patterns in the context of college students' courtship relationships.

METHODS

Participants

Altogether 127 participants filled out the questionnaire. The volunteers were drawn from lower division speech communication classes from three western Universities. There were 66.9% females and 33.1% males in the sample. Participants were selected based on the following three criteria: (1) they had been dating for at least three weeks or more, (2) they had to be in a face-to-face dating relationship with their romantic partners at the time they filled out the questionnaire, and (3) participants in long-distance relationship, cohabitation relationship, and marital relationship were ruled out. The mean age of the particpants was 20 years old. The mean duration of their dating relationships was 2 years 6 months.

Procedures

Data were gathered through a 12-page questionnaire handed out in class time. The questionnaire could be completed within half an hour. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their reported information on the questionnaire. Each respondent answered four questions on the love expression variable, and twenty-five questions on the dating decision-making variable. The decision-making items were generated through pooling and content analyzing over fifty items contributed by students who were involved in romantic relationships in five undergraduate speech classes.

Instrumentation

Two sets of questions were used in the questionnaire: One set on the love expression variable, and the other set on the decision-making variable. Communication of love variable was measured by the following four items: (1) Has either one of you openly expressed love for the other? (Check yes or no) (2) Who was the very first to say "I love you" or some similar phrases? (Me, the other person) (3) Who now says "I love you" or some similar phrase most often? (Me, the other person, equally) (4) Who now expresses love without words most often? (Me, the other person, equally)

Participants were instructed that there were no right or wrong answers. It was explained that sometimes love was not expressed or articulated. Sometimes one individual in a romantic relationship expressed love more frequently than the significant other. On the basis of these four questions, respondents were classified into the following love conditions: Low involvement, self greater than other in love expression, other greater than self in love expression, both high and equal expression of love, and both high and switching love expression patterns.

Subjects were then asked who typically made decisions in several areas

of their dating relationship. For example, who decides how much money to spend on a date? Who decides where to go on a date? Who decides when to leave a party or social function? In addition to indicating who typically made each decision (me, the other person, or both equally), participants were asked to respond to the following two items on a 7-point scale: How <u>often</u> is this decision made? (very rarely to very frequently) and How <u>important</u> is this decision to you? (not important to very important)

On the basis of these two questions each decision was classified as frequent (score >4) or infrequent (score <4), and decisions which were neither frequent or infrequent (score=4) were dropped from further analysis. The same procedure was used to classify decisions as unimportant or important. Once this was completed, the decisions which were classified were to be further categorized in terms of who makes the decisions. The following codings for the four types of decision-making patterns were used: (1) Self= more than half decisions were made by self; (2) Other= more than half decisions were made by significant other; (3) Mutual= more than half decisions were made by both jointly; and (4) Parallel= less than half of the decisions in a given category failed to meet the criteria for self, other, or mutual.

RESULTS

Communication of Love and Decision-making Typology

Of the 127 participants who responded to the questionnaire, 29.8% participants reported that the expression of love was an equally-shared process. While 25.0% respondents reported that their significant others expressed love <u>first</u> and <u>most</u> <u>often</u>, 17.7% respondents perceived love expression as a give-and-take switching activity. Only 14.5% respondents reported themselves as expressing love <u>first</u> and <u>most often</u>, and 12.9% respondents in the low love expression category.

According to Safilios-Rothschild, there should be an inverse correlation between the frequency and importance of decision-making items, as frequent but unimportant decisions made up the Implementation Power dimension, and infrequent but important decisions made up the Orchestration Power dimension. However, in using a series of Pearson zero-order correlation statistics to assess the relationships between frequency and importance of all 25 decision-making items, the significant and positive correlations between frequency and importance of 23 out of 25 items indicated that Safilios-Rothschild's power typology did not hold true in this particular study. Overall, 16 dating decisions were moderately correlated between 0.40 to 0.70, and 7 items had low correlations between 0.20 and 0.40. All correlations were significant at the .05 level. The results suggested that the dimensions of Instrumentation Power and Orchestration Power were not applicable in the context of college students' dating relationships.

Specific Relationships between Love Expression Patterns and Decision-Making Patterns

A series of chi-square tests were used to examine the distribution frequencies between love expression patterns (low involvement, self, other, equal, and switch)and decision-making patterns (self, other, mutual, and parallel) along the separate dimensions of frequency, infrequency, importance, and unimportance of dating decisions. The investigation led to these findings: First, the overall chi-square tests of significance indicated that love expression patterns and frequency of decision-making patterns were significant ($\chi^2 = 22.5$, df=12, $p<.05$): (a) Respondents who were in the "low love expression" condition perceived making frequent decisions as mainly splitting evenly between significant others (31.3%) and the parallel pattern (31.3%); (b) respondents who were in the "self greater than other" love condition perceived making frequent decisions as primarily a parallel activity (33.3%),

then a self-oriented activity (27.8%), a mutual activity (22.2%), and an other-oriented activity (16.7%); (c) respondents who were in the "other greater than self" love condition perceived decision-making as mainly a mutual activity (51.6%), then a parallel mode (29.0%), and a self-oriented mode (19.4%) No participants who perceived their partners as being "more in love" reported decision-making as an other-oriented activity; (d) respondents who were in the "equal" love expression condition also viewed decision-making as primarily a mutual activity (59.5%), followed by the parallel mode (18.9%), self-oriented mode (13.5%), and an other-oriented mode (8.1%); and (e)participants who were in the "switching" love expression condition indicated that frequency of decision-makings as either a mutual activity (40.9%) or a parallel activity (36.4%), then followed by an other-oriented activity (18.2%), and minimally a self-oriented activity (4.5%).

The overall chi-square tests of love expression patterns and infrequency of decision-making patterns were nonsignificant (χ^2=10.28, df=12, p<.59, ns). The overall chi-square tests of love expression patterns and importance of decision-making patterns in college students' dating relationships were also nonsignificant (χ^2=14.46, df=12, p<.07, ns). However, the statistical trends between the two types of patterns approached significance and the most interesting results were: (a) Respondents in the "low love expression" condition perceived the making of important decisions as primarily a parallel process (54.5%). No one respondent in this love condition perceived making important decisions as a joint mutual activity; (b) respondents who were in the "self greater than other" love condition also perceived making important decisions as mainly a parallel process (50.0%). Again, no one respondent claimed making important decisions as a joint mutual activity; (c) respondents who reported

their romantic others as "more in love" perceived the making of important dating decisions as either a parallel activity (52.9%), or a self-oriented activity (47.1%); (d) similar to the last condition, respondents who were in the "equally in love" condition perceived making important decisions as either a parallel process (66.7%), or a self-initiation process (33.3%); and (e) respondents who were in the "switching" love expression condition definitely perceived making important dating decisions as a parallel activity (92.9%), and minimally a self-oriented activity (7.1%).

Finally, in testing the relationships between love expression patterns and unimportant decision-making patterns, results of chi-square tests were nonsignificant (χ^2=19.01, df=12, $p < .08$, ns). The interesting trends to note were that all respondents in all five love conditions perceived making unimportant dating decisions as predominantly a mutual activity, then followed by the parallel decision-making pattern (except for respondents in the "self greater than other" love condition which was followed by self-oriented decision-making pattern).

Sex-role, Love and Decision-making Patterns

Literature review had indicated that sex-role played an important part in the context of love expression and decision-making patterns in romantic relationships (Safilios-Rothschild, 1970, 1976). However, in this particular study, no significant relationship was found between sex-role and the communication of love patterns (χ^2= 3.02, df=4, $p < .48$, ns). In examining the relationship between sex-role and frequency of decision-making patterns, a significant relationship was found between male-female differences and frequency of decision patterns (χ^2= 15,02, df=3, $p < .01$). Of all the male respondents in the sample, 42.9% males perceived making frequent decisions as a mutual process, 33.3% males reported making frequent decisions as a self-oriented process, then followed by parallel pattern (14.3%), and other-

oriented pattern (9.5%). Of all the female respondents in the sample, 44.7% perceived making frequent dating decisions as a mutual process, or a parallel process (34.1%), then followed by the other-oriented mode (12.9%), and the self-oriented mode (8.2%). No significant difference was found between sex-role and infrequency of decision-making patterns in the context of college students' courtship relationships ($\chi^2=1.54$, df=3, $p<.67$, ns).

In examining the relationship between sex-role and importance of decision-making patterns, a statistically significant relationship was found between sex differences and important decision-making patterns ($\chi^2=16.43$, df=2, $p<.0001$). Of all the male respondents in the sample, an overwhelming 61.5% males perceived making important dating decisions as a self-oriented activity, followed by the parallel pattern (34.6%), and minimally by their romantic female others (3.8%). Of all the female respondents in the sample, an overwhelming 78.3% females perceived making important dating decisions as a parallel activity, followed by self (15.2%), then their significant others (6.5%). Interesting to note was that no one male or female in the sample perceived making important dating decisions as a mutual interdependent activity.

In relating sex-role with the unimportant dimension of dating decision-making patterns, a significant relationship was found between sex differences and unimportant decision-making patterns ($\chi^2=10.85$, df=3, $p<.01$). Of all the male participants in the study, 50.0% males perceived making unimportant dating decisions as a joint mutual activity, then followed by the parallel category (28.6%) and the self-oriented category (21.4%). Of all the female participants in the study, half (50.6%) of all females also perceived making unimportant decisions as a mutual activity in their dating relationships, followed by the parallel category (28.2%), then other-oriented activity

(14.1%) and a self-oriented activity (7.1%). Interestingly, not a single male participant perceived making unimportant dating decisions as an other-oriented activity. For them, making unimportant decisions were relegated to the province of mutual joint decision activities. Whereas in the case of making important dating decisions, the males perceived themselves as primarily responsible for making the various decisions, while their female counterparts perceived the process as a give-and-take parallel activity.

DISCUSSION

The findings in this study failed to support Safilios-Rothschild's typology on Implementation Power and Orchestration Power in intimate relationships. Two plausible reaons could be made: First, the nature of decision-making patterns in college students'dating relationships was qualitatively very different from that of marital decision-making patterns. Safilios-Rothschild had developed the typology through the analysis of marital decision-making patterns. Second, the dating decision-making items were not accurately tapping the underlying characteristics of college students' decision-making patterns. Hence, a more rigorous approach in testing the reliability and validity of the decision-making scale should be conducted in future studies.

Perhaps the most interesting result in this investigation was that an overwhelmingly majority of the participants perceived dating decision-making patterns as an equally-shared activity or a give-and-take parallel activity. The more frequently they made the decisions, the more important the decisions. No consistent power patterns were displayed through the dimension of frequent but unimportant decisions, or infrequent but important decisions.

In addition, an overwhelming majority of male respondents perceived

making important dating decisions as a self-oriented masculine activity; while near 80.0% of female respondents in the sample perceived making important dating decisions such as money issue, time spend together, or resolving conflict issue, as primarily a parallel give-and-take process. Conversely and conjointly, both males and females perceived the making of unimportant dating decisions as a mutual equally-shared activity, while not one single male or female perceived the making of important dating decisions as a mutual joint process.

In summary, although the results of this study failed to test the hypotheses of communication of love patterns and the decision-making power typology, several interesting findings emerged out of this exploratory investigation. First and foremost, in future studies, the underlying differences of friendship decision-making patterns, dating decision-making patterns, and marital decision-making patterns, need to be critically addressed and examined before conceptual ideas can be borrowed and applied in cross-relational contexts. Second, given the strong distinctions between male and female perceptions of decision-making patterns on the importance dimension, further studies should be conducted into this "cultural construction of reality" process whereby males and females evolve and formulate their distinct cultural worldviews and cultural perceptions. Drawing from the results of the study, it seems that the male respondents in this study still carried the traditional male-dominance image when important romantic decisions were involved, while their female counterparts viewed important decision-making as a more egalitarian give-and-take process. Finally, future studies may want to use a co-orientation approach in studying romantic decision-making patterns by assessing the joint reactions of romantic partners in intimate dating relationships. With the overwhelming majority of

participants perceived dating decision-making as a mutual or parallel activity, one wonders if it is the romantic ideal or the "romantic chemistry" that may cause certain perceptual biases in this self-report study. Studies should also be conducted in tracking the changes and developments of decision-making patterns in these romantic dyads from relational escalation to de-escalation phases.

In conclusion, the intent of this study was to explore the relationship between love expression patterns and dating decision-making patterns. Although the study did not find support for the Implementation Power and the Orchestration Power typology of romantic decision-making, the results between love expression patterns and frequency and importance of decision-making, and the findings between sex differences in intimate decision-making, contribute to a general understanding of decision-making process in romantic relationships and decision-making patterns in the male and the female worlds.

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